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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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RESOLVING AND DOING.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—PHIL. ii., 12, 13.

It would seem from this declaration, abundantly corroborated elsewhere, that salvation is not a decree or simple act. We are not brought by any overwhelming shock or impulse into an absolute salvable state. It is a condition which is to be wrought out as education is, by adopting right lines, by pursuing rational methods, and by continuing therein until we have gained foothold and strength. There is a nature in man that is right. That which is called our corrupt human nature designates simply the wrong uses to which men have put right faculties. There is a right nature. The reason, in and of itself, is right. Its uses may be perverted, but the faculty is right. The affections are right; and if they are rightly used they are virtues, they are graces, they are undoubted excellences; but they all need development. They need to be applied more and more to every part of life. There is a work of education for the body, with which we are familiar; there is a work of education for the mind, in the adapting it to the various objects and ends of life, with which we are familiar; and in the household there is more or less training of the disposition. Those who have the good fortune to be brought up under wise parents know what it is to be under discipline and education—under restraint against

that which is evil, and under stimulus to that which is good.

Now, this analogy goes on, and all the mind's moral sentiments are the subjects of development and of education. And the importance of education increases as you rise toward the realm of the higher feelings, or those which work toward the invisible—those that are under spiritual instincts or sentiments. And it is in this direction that man's salvation lies, in so far as the human side is concerned. To be saved is to be salvable—to be in a condition which implies and permits salvation; and this is man's work. We are to work out our own salvation. More than that, much is implied in the qualification, “with fear and trembling.”

Now, there are a great many kinds of fear, some of which are very coarse, appropriate to low and almost brutal natures, and unworthy of a man more highly and truly developed. The fear that you would apply to a savage is inappropriate to a civilized man; and the fear which you would search for among civilized men that roam the plain is quite out of place among those that live in retirement, and are conscientiously attempting to act according to justice. The fear and the trembling with which we are to work out our salvation indicate *intensity*—that kind of apprehension with which men tremble under excitement when they are pursuing an object that is exceedingly dear to them: not fear in the sense of pungent dread or terror; but that fear which produces apprehensiveness, keenness of desire and unwillingness to lose. There is a sort of half feeling of uncertainty in connection with it, in all the great pursuits of life—in the things which absorb us, and in which we have planted ourselves. We are familiar with this kind of anxiety. We work for wealth; and we work in competitions for a place or for a name; we work in society for the favor of those whom we would win; we work for ambition; we work for all the great ends of life that stimulate men; and we work for them with this very trembling apprehensiveness. We put our heart into them so that it quivers with anxiety. So the command is, Work out your religious character; work out purity, and humility, and gentleness, and mercy, and truth. All divine

fruits are of the divine Spirit; work them out, with such earnestness that you shall be full of fear and of trembling—that kind of fear and trembling which men have in other pursuits, where their hearts are wholly engrossed.

The conception of highest manhood—the Christian manhood, that manhood which is the fruit of the divine Spirit working on the soul—is to be pursued, then, not listlessly nor indifferently. The path to it was never yet so plain or so easy to a man in every part of his nature that you are likely to stumble on it, and, without knowing it, find that you are a thoroughly Christianized man. There never was a man so favorably made or placed that it required no will or effort on his part to rise into the fullness of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. All the original tendencies of the mind involve in them more or less of self-seeking—more or less of the carnal elements; and no man rises into a truly Christian or Christlike spirit,—by which, instead of evil, he loves good, and instead of self-seeking seeks the welfare of another, and the glory of God, the invisible Being of creation,—without strenuous efforts; and this not once for all, but continuously, as against the world, as against his own passions and appetites, as against social wrongs, and as against the temptations that spring from business. By all those influences men are held back from the attempt to live upon a high plane a truly spiritual and Christian life.

Now comes the declaration, “It is God that worketh in you.” A great many, when it is taught that men are to work out their own salvation, are afraid that it will inspire men with a vain confidence. They feel it to be important to teach men that they are absolutely dependent upon God, and that without him they can do nothing. That is all very true; yet I have never seen any particular reason why men should be taught that. Suppose I were to say to a man who had my microscope, and who was about to examine objects, “Now, my friend, I want you to understand that your eyesight, your vision, is absolutely dependent upon the light. Bear that in mind every time you undertake to look through the microscope. There is no such thing as vision without light, and you are dependent upon the light.” Suppose I should say

to the farmer, "Work your farm; but remember that you are dependent on the seasons." Suppose I were to say to the hungry man, "Now, my friend, here is food; but I want you to understand that you are entirely dependent upon this food for life and strength." Of course he is. Everybody knows that already.

Some theologians are very much afraid that we will teach men that they can help themselves. They stop us, they put us back, and say, "You must honor God in everything." I, too, think we ought to honor God in everything. "You must not take away from God the glory of working out the salvation of men. Men cannot save themselves. They depend upon God. A man cannot see without eyes; a man cannot eat without a mouth; a man cannot live without the conditions of life; a man cannot do anything unless he has been born." All these things are very true. But, really, is it the way to inspire men, to say to them, "You have no natural power; you lost it by the fall—whatever that was; you are all dependent upon God; and it is presumption for you to undertake to endue yourself with those attributes or states of mind that are wrought out in men by God's Spirit"? Men seem to feel, as to this matter, that it is almost a forgery for a man to attempt to endue himself with humility, with meekness, with faith, with aspiration, with love, with hope, and with power in it. They think it to be somewhat as if a man should write his father's name on a check, when only his father has any business to write his name there. It seems to be thought that God has a right to instill in men right purposes and resolutions, but men have no right to assume them. And when we quote the passage, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," they say, "Ah, yes! but don't you see that it also says, "God worketh in you"? Yes, *that is the ground on which I exhort men to work*, that God works in them—that he works incessantly in them, by ten thousand more modes than we know of or suspect: not alone in the ways which we point out in our sermons, but in a multitude of ways besides; not alone in the ways in which men's thoughts and feelings rise from low to high, and in which their feelings grow and swell like tides,

but in infinite ways; not alone during revivals, not alone during impressive hours on Sundays, in the church, but always and continually the great brooding soul of God overhangs the race, and there are down-dropping influences exerted upon men perpetually, and operating upon their souls, dissuading or persuading, arousing or fortifying. In multitudes of ways, beyond our conception, the vivific nature of God is carrying life and power to human souls everywhere.

When, then, I urge men to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,—that is, with earnestness,—and say to them, “It is God that worketh in you,” they say, “If God is working in me, there won’t be any need of my working.” Why not? The apostle says, in Corinthians, “Workers together with God.” Cannot two work at the same thing? Is it impossible that there should be two workers, and that there should be two influences, one from above, and that they should meet and co-operate?

I say to a child, “Now, attend, my daughter, because your mother is watching you, and taking care of you, and helping you at every step. Give yourself to your studies and duties;” and she says, “But if mother is going to take care of them I do not need to.” But do not the child and the mother and father co-operate? Do not the pupil and the teacher co-operate? Is not the action of the scholar as necessary as that of the teacher? The teacher stimulates, but the scholar studies. There never was a teacher so skillful that he could understand anything for his pupil. Every boy has to understand for himself. We talk about being self-educated, as if that were a rare achievement. There never was a man who could educate another man. You can store up knowledge, and educate yourself; but no man can educate you. All education is self-education, in the nature of things.

And so, if it be declared that the divine Spirit is working in us, it does not mean that it does our work for us, and then infixes it in us. The work of conversion is not as if one made up the whole work of a clock, and went and put it into the empty case, each part in its place, and wound it, and set the pendulum a-going, and said, “Go on and tick.” Char-

acter is not made in that way. It is not first constructed and then put in its place. Where there is a rightly formed character, there are aspirations of soul, and lofty desires, and gracious affections; and these things we develop. We as really develop them by that which is in us, as they are developed by that which is in God; and that which is in us, and that which is in him, co-work. And the command is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to—" What? Two things that are the most difficult in the world—"to *will* and to *do*."

Here is where men especially need divine help—to will that which is right. Many persons see what is right, but they look upon it just as they in the street look on objects that do not belong to them, and never will. They discern the right, but they do not will to follow it. Many persons admire what is right in others—in a vision of the imagination they admire it—without any sense of its relation to their personality. Many men that lie admire the truth. Many that give up to intemperance admire temperance. Many who are dishonest admire honesty in others. Many men that are far from heroic admire heroism. Indeed, by the law of compensation, we often admire most that which we have lost ourselves; and the unvirtuous admire virtue; the weak admire strength, and so on through the whole category.

Then, there are a great many people who *wish* right things, but do not *will* them. They wish, but they do not put forth any effort to gratify that wish. There never was a lazy man, probably, that did not wish he was rich. I do not believe there ever was a man in the world who, when his bad disposition had brought him to grief, did not wish that he had a better disposition. A man in a passion offends his best friend, and he says, "Plague on my tongue! I wish it was out; I wish I could govern myself, and not talk so as to spoil everything." He wishes; oh, yes, he wishes; but wishing is not willing. There is something more in willing than in wishing. And although men admire and wish, they do not choose. No man can be said to will to possess or to choose any object or any grace, until he does something more

than to admire it and to wish for it. No man wills to have the truth until he desires it more than he does untruth—until it is predominant in him. No man wills to be industrious until he prefers it above every other grace, under the circumstances.

The ox does not want to walk fast; but when you keep goading, goading him, then he wills to do it; he prefers that to the other thing; but it is not until he prefers it and does it that he wills it.

A man living in a certain course of life, and feeling that it is evil, and knowing many of its mischiefs, talks about it, and means to do this, that, and the other thing; but it is not until his will, under the concentration of various influences that are brought to bear upon him, takes hold of the right thing energetically, that it can be said that he has willed it.

That is the great trouble with men in the matter of religion. Do you say that you admire religion? There is not a person who had the good fortune, of all fortunes the best, of a father and mother that belonged to the church and had a Christian spirit that made his child-memory of them sacred—there is not a person like that who can look back upon the lives of his parents without saying, “I wish I were as good as my father. He was a better man than I am, and I wish I were like him.”

There is many a man who sits at the table and gambles, where the coarse joke passes backward and forward; and yet when some evil story strikes at his mother, he stops and says, “Now, boys, that has gone far enough; I am not going to talk about that any longer.” He is low, and brutal, and hard; but he has a tender thought of his mother; and if, sometimes, you could see him alone, you would see him melted to tears by his recollections of her, and you would hear him say, “I wish I were as good a man as she was a woman.” He admires and he wishes; but that is all, and nothing comes of it.

That is the trouble. You do not go far enough. You admire virtues, and you wish you had them, but you do not take the proper steps to acquire them. You do not will nor choose to have them. This is true in every element and

department of life. You want accomplishments, you want means, you wish you had them, but you are not willing to pay what they cost of strife and endeavor. You have not the patience and the continuity which are required to obtain them.

And that is the very point where, if anybody wants help, God stands ready to grant it. He works in men "to will." There it is, therefore, that the light beams, and that the blessing comes. There is hope for you, if you wish, and if you call on God for help in order that you may will, and that, willing, you may do. There is encouragement for every man who is discontented with his low estate, and with his ignoble character. Work out your own salvation, for God will work in you to will. Open your heart to him. Lay bare your disposition to God. There is an influence in the air, a universal, divine will, atmospheric, that strengthens men's wishes, and points them, acuminates them, and empowers them, until they become determinations and choices.

But, when a man has chosen, when he has determined, is he safe? No. Paul said, "*To will* is present with me, but how to *perform* I know not." How many men have made up their minds and changed them! How many persons have resolved, and have failed to carry out their resolutions! How many men form purposes that they do not carry out! I think our resolutions are much like children's amusements when they blow soap-bubbles. They are made of breath, and they grow larger, and they become more beautiful as they grow larger, and the more beautiful they are the more perishable they become; and as they are shaken from the pipe, see how they rise, iridescent, reflecting the rarest pictures; and while you look at them they are not there. And men—oh, what dreams they have of virtues! oh, what dreams they have of piety! oh, what resolutions they make when they are under the influence of soul-subduing music, and while they are listening to the discourse which satisfies the reason, stealing upon the affections and the tenderer sentiments! How often men, sitting under such circumstances, say to themselves, "I see this as I never saw it before, and I will go home and change my life. I am

determined that, by the grace of God, I will be a better man. I will have prayers to-night." He goes home, and says, "Let me think this thing over." Somehow the colors are not so bright on the way home as they were when he was in church and listening to the discourse. When he gets home, he says, "Well, now, my wife will think it very strange; and I will put it off until to-morrow morning, and then I will tell her and the children that I am going to turn over a new leaf, and have prayers, and live a reformed life." He sleeps upon it; and when morning comes, he says, "What was it that I was thinking of last night? Oh! I recollect. Well, I don't feel very much like it this morning. I guess I will wait until to-night." And that is about the last struggle that he has on that subject. His goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

Another man is very well satisfied that he is living an erroneous life. His associations are bad. His imagination is becoming contaminated. His very health is being undermined. He sees in himself the slackening of the nerves of industry. His boon companions and convivial friends dodge him. And he says, "It is time for me to stop." The text of the sermon, it may be, that he just heard preached was "The time past is sufficient"; and it has opened up to him his past record. It has disclosed to him what his life has been, and what the dangers are into which he is running. Listening to the sermon, and hearing the text, "The time past is sufficient," reiterated in his ears, he says, "That sermon is aimed right at me, and I will stop; I will reform;" and he goes home with a firm purpose; and his purpose abides with him until he meets some companion, until he finds himself in some congenial, pleasant company, and their spirits mix together, and he is beguiled and soothed and quieted; and before twenty-four hours are passed he says, "Well, I did mean to give up my past life, but I will take another turn." There was the will that was strong the night before; but, how to perform. Oh! if it could be done by willing, he would have done it that night. If it could have been done by praying, he would have done it. If it could have been done by writing in a journal, "I hereby vow and purpose to quit all illicit so-

ciety, and lead a true life," he would have done it. If these things would only have done it, it would have been done. But to-day it required that he should meet all obstacles, and stem social influences. It required that when temptation arose he should have the power of subduing it. It required that when he was thrown among his old companions he should be strong enough to control his appetites. It seemed to him when he was at home as though he had the strength to hold himself back from the temptations which before had been irresistible. He had the desire, he had the will, to do it; but his will deliquesced before the influences to which he had so long yielded. Before he came to the point where a choice was to be made, where a purpose was formed and confirmed, he was gone.

Now, as men get the Divine Spirit, in the first place, to help them to make up their minds to do right, and show them what is right, and encourage them toward the right way; so they need the Divine Spirit when they come to execute their purpose, and transmute purpose into action, into habit, into life. Blessed be God, then, for the encouragement of the declaration, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Well, if it be God that works in men to will and to do both, why is it that men do not generally will? And if he works in them to do, why is it they do not perform? It is because, though the Divine Spirit works upon men, it must needs work upon open hearts, and have access to them.

I go out to the meadows, in a few weeks, and say, "Now, grass, begin to grow! Flowers, begin to blossom!" The clouds are passing away, and the sunshine is coming. Spring is not far off, and the buds are creeping up. In a few weeks I can go out and say to the dead-lying meadows, "O turf, work! Send forth your green spires and your bright blossoms. O boughs work! and lift up your banners. Hold out your fragrant cups of incense; fling them to the sky. Rejoice that the summer is coming. Work, work." And all the meadows hear me and obey. But here lie pieces of plank, and there are roots under them which do not come forth because they are covered up. All the air is full of warmth; but whatever

is hid from the shining of the sun, whether purposely or accidentally, feels but remotely its influence; and that which would otherwise take place does not take place.

Now, if men shut up their reason (and they do), if they turn away their affections (and they do), if they are not honest with themselves and with their God (and they are not), although the whole heaven is full of summer, their hearts will be full of winter. You can make winter. Let him who wants it take an east and west running fence, and on the north side heap snow, and the sun will not strike over there during the whole year; only an atmospheric warmth will be felt there; and there shall be a foot deep of ice there while on the other side of the fence you are gathering fresh vegetables for the table. There will be the same atmospheric conditions on both sides, only the sun, striking on one side and not on the other, will make the difference.

It is the same with men who are contiguous to each other. One is open to the Divine Spirit, and it enters into his heart and resides there. Another refuses to open himself to the Divine Spirit, turns away from the strivings of the blessed influence, and loses it.

It lies with every man whether the divine will shall fructify his will; whether he shall be influenced by the spirit of God; whether the work of the power from on high shall be efficacious with him.

No man was ever converted by accident. No man was ever converted who was not in such a condition that the divine influence could penetrate his heart and stimulate him to the development of a Christian character. No man can become what God requires of every one of us without the help of the Spirit which is freely rendered to every man, and without his own serious and most earnest labor.

You are born low enough, animal enough, worldly enough; you are born of the flesh; you are born in those conditions in order that you may work up out of them into that nobler manhood which is in Christ Jesus; and it demands the whole force of your nature, as it is worthy of the whole force of your nature. You are not living for an hour; you are living for eternity. Your destiny turns on character; and the for-

mation of that character, the upbuilding of it, is one of the most glorious ambitions that you can essay. It requires the divine power and the human power in co-operation. The divine power is ever present; and it is for you to determine whether that divine power, persuading and striving, shall prevail with you and draw you in the direction of things right. If you are willing, in the day of God's power, you will rise by the divine help, step by step, until you stand in Zion and before God.

Now, if there be those here who have thought often and often that they would attempt to be Christians, perhaps you have said to yourself, "If I can, by a few weeks set apart, get a head of feeling, an impulse, that shall shoot me into the experience of a Christian, why then the thing will work itself out. Once converted, always converted. No falling from grace. If in some revival I could only, by the warmth and enthusiasm of the people about me, be brought to the welding point, I am sure I could hold fast."

My friends, the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard-seed, the smallest of all seeds when it is sown; and it sprouts and throws down its roots, and throws up its branches, and grows imperceptibly, little by little, little by little. It is like the leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal, which was as good as gone, so far as you could see, but which leavened the whole lump. The kingdom of God in the hearts of men begins very small, and works onward and always to the very end. Do not wait for a revival or any other extraordinary influence to give you a start and an impetus. The Christian way is the true way, the Christian character is the manly character, the Christian life is the better life in every respect; and do not wait for dramatic convictions. Do not wait for lightning-like emotions. Do not wait for anything. God is on your side. Your knowledge is abundantly sufficient. Resolve, to-night, "By the grace of God I will endeavor, from this time forth, to overrule my passions and appetites and dispositions that are not consonant with the Lord Jesus Christ. I will enroll myself as a scholar; and to learn the divine will shall be the purpose of my life." You will often fail; you will frequently miss, as the child does

that is learning to spell ; you will be like a child that is learning to write, and that scrawls before he writes well ; or that is learning to read, and stumbles over the words before he reads fluently ; or that is learning arithmetic, and makes many mistakes before he can work the examples correctly. Let every man who undertakes to love God and do his will expect to meet with obstacles ; but let him put on the Lord Jesus Christ and persevere, and he will triumph in the end. Take his dispositions and begin to practice them ; and if you fail do not be discouraged. Go on, looking to God in prayer for light and strength, and I will guarantee what the result will be.

If the soul that is beginning to live under the influence of the higher impulses knows itself, and realizes its affinities and the dignities that belong to it, and is drawn steadily upward, it shall advance from strength to strength until it stands in Zion and before God. I pray you, do not squander again, to-night, any thoughts or purposes that may have arisen in your mind while I have been speaking. Sanctify the time and the hour. Rise up and go away from here with a sense of your duty. Go with an earnest purpose formed for your life, and with a sense that you must connect this life with the other in order to fulfill your destiny. Men that know how low and ill-bred they are spiritually, and who know that without love to God they cannot rise to their higher manhood, seize the opportunity.

God is shining, and the divine Spirit is striving, and the Word is witnessing, and those who have gone forth call to you from the battlements of heaven, saying, "Come, come, come !" Go ye, begin to live that glorious spiritual life which shall never terminate till the throne of God itself crumbles.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice, Almighty God, in thy supremacy. We rejoice that thy power is exerted everywhere. We behold it. Though we cannot perceive all thy truth, yet much comes to us, and more is hidden because we are so imperfect, and do not know how to discern things spiritual. We rejoice that thou art Sovereign, and that thy will is supreme. None can counsel thee. Thou givest wisdom to all that are created; they borrow from thee; and if they return and come to thee with words of wisdom, they but bring back light which is reflected on them. We rejoice that, being the wisest and the strongest, thou art also the best; and that that which we call good in thee is yet better, and that we may understand thee from the best things which are in ourselves. We rejoice in the truth. Thou art nobly true in fidelity. And who is faithful like unto thee? In all uprightness we rejoice; and we rejoice in love; but where is there uprightness and where is there love comparable to thine? We rejoice in patience, and in self-sacrifice, and in long-suffering; and yet these are in us but a faint and reflected light, while in thee they are orbs glowing with original lustre. And we rejoice, more and more, as we grow in stature inwardly, and in the knowledge of the Spirit. More and more glorious dost thou open up to our thought and to our feeling. We rejoice in that which we see and in that which we feel, and we have a blessed assurance that all that lies beyond will, by and by, interpret itself to us so as to be better than we think. Now, we pray that we may be brought near to thy throne by an abundance of love; by a sense of duty and obedience; by filial fear. May we be drawn very near to thee, that thy heart may leaven ours.

We pray that thou wilt keep every one of us from temptation to sin. Open the door of escape to all that are tempted. May they be able to overcome easily besetting sins, and all small sins that lead continually to greater ones.

We pray that thou wilt be near to all those who are seeking to walk in the way of righteousness, and scarcely know where to step. Wilt thou make the path plain to their vision. Wilt thou work in them so that they may feel inclined to walk in the Lord, and to live blamelessly.

We pray that thou wilt help all those who are tempted by their passions—by pride, by selfishness, and by avarice. May they be able to know their own estate; to perceive the force that works upon them and in them, and mightily to strive against whatsoever is wrong, to overcome it in the strength of God, and to stand continually under every conflict victorious.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to those who desire to behold thee, the vision of thy goodness. Upon those who mourn the want of faith, breathe thou thy Spirit. To those who desire to rejoice and cannot, give, we pray thee, the spirit of cheer and of song. We pray that thou wilt comfort any whom thou hast greatly tried. May they be able to acquiesce in the Spirit of God. May their experiences come as God's messages to them. May they humble

themselves before God. May they be chastised by the stroke of thy hand, knowing that it is the Father's discipline, who chastises not for his own vengeance, but for our profit, that we may become partakers of his holiness.

Grant thy blessing to all those to whose minds thou art carrying unsettling truths. Bless all those who preach the Gospel. Bless those who are working for the reformation of morals. Wilt thou cover this land as by a flood with thy divine influences. Bring, we beseech of thee, every success to schools, to the honor and glory of thy name. Bless colleges and seminaries. Bless all efforts for diffusing true knowledge and right influences among those who are in darkness. May those who are despised be sought out and made honorable.

And we pray that thou wilt bless those who do wrong. Inspire them with a sense of their wrong-doing. Arouse their conscience. We pray that they may be led from their evil courses to do the things which are right before God and man. Bless all this land, and all the States that are therein.

May thy will be done in this nation, and may it become strong, not for violence, not for selfishness, not for aggression or self-aggrandizement, but that it may be a light to weary and struggling nations, and that it may give courage and hope to those who are seeking liberty. And may all the nations of the earth arise and meet the coming of their God. May thy voice be potential; and may we everywhere discern the glory of the Lord arising and shining, until the whole earth shall be filled therewith.

And to thy name, Father, Son, and Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou bless the word of exhortation. May it not be in vain. May the truth search out all the motives and emotions of the heart. We pray that many may be made willing in the day of thy power, and be encouraged to go on. And may thy name be glorified in this assembly. Bless all who preach the Gospel. Bless all the churches. May they be filled with the divine presence. May they work for things high and pure. And grant, we pray thee, that at last, as one by one we go forth from the church militant, we may enter the heavenly church triumphant, to rejoice there over those victories which thou hast ministered unto us.

And to thy name, Father, Son, and Spirit, shall be praises for evermore. *Amen.*

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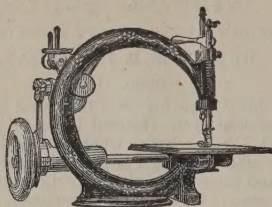
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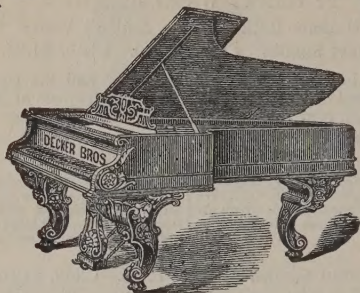
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